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# MŌRĀN 'ETHŌ

12

## JOHN OF DARA COMMENTARY ON THE EUCHARIST

Translated from Syriac by  
**BABY VARGHESE**



St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (SEERI)

Baker Hill, Kottayam-686 001, Kerala, India

April 1999



**JOHN OF DARA**

**COMMENTARY ON THE EUCHARIST**

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**Baby Varghese**

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# *Foreword*

*The Commentary on the Eucharist by John of Dara should be of interest and prove beneficial to all who value the wisdom and tradition of the ancient Syriac Church. John of Dara wrote in the ninth century. His work is an important source of knowledge of the evolution of the liturgy of Saint James. His commentary has features clearly distinct from those of Jacob of Edessa, Moses bar Kepha, Dionisius bar Salibi and others.*

*Rev. Dr. Baby Varughese is a renowned Professor of Liturgy in the Orthodox Syrian Seminary at Kottayam. His expertise in the subject makes his work, a valuable contribution to liturgical science of the Syrian Church. This publication is the first of its kind in the English language.*

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## GLOSSARY

- Annâpûrô : The veil with which the chalice and paten are covered.
- Bet-šâmôšé : The room or repository in which the clergy leave their dresses. This corresponds to the Sacristy.
- ghôntô : A prayer of inclining said with bend head and low voice. Latin : Oratio secreta. Opposite is tlôitô (= a prayer said with uplifted voice).
- gmûrtô : lit: coal or live coal. The holy eucharistic bread is so called in Syriac tradition following Is. 6:6.
- kâtôliki (qâtûliqi): from the greek katholiké. a general prayer.
- kôrûzûto : a proclamation, recitation, bidding prayer, litany.
- ma'nitô : a hymn; antiphon.
- mârwâhtô : a fan of flabellum.
- mkâprônô : purificator used by the celebrant to clean his fingers.
- myron : Holy Chrism
- pôté : Towels
- pristô : chosen bread used for the holy eucharist.
- qestrômô : The space between the nave and the sanctuary.
- qûrobô : oblation, offering, the eucharistic liturgy.
- qûrobô : oblation, offering, the eucharistic liturgy, the consecrated bread.
- sedrô : Name of a long prayer in the form of a series of expositions or meditations, usually preceded by an introduction (prûmiûn).
- šûšôpô : the veil which covers the tablitô
- tablitô : a tablet; (same as greek antimension), made of wood or stone placed on the altar. The chalice and Paten are always placed on the tablitô.
- tahpitô : cover or veil over the Paten and chalice.

# INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

We do not have much informations to give a detailed biography of John, bishop of Dara (+825) (1). He was a monk of the monastery of Mar Hananya (Der Zafran), near Mardin in Tur Abdin. John was a friend of the Patriarch Dionysius Tellmahré of Antioch (818-845), who consecrated him Metropolitan of Dara (Anastasiopolis). Their mutual friendship is illustrated by the fact that the patriarch dedicated his Chronicle to John in 837 (2).

## Theological works of John:

The known works of John are the following: (3)

- (i) A long treatise on the soul in 8 chapters. (4)
- (ii) Treatise on the priesthood in 4 chapters. (5)
- (iii) Treatise on the Eucharist (= De Oblatione)
- (iv) A Treatise on the Resurrection of the body in 4 chapters (6)
- (v) Commentaries on the Celestial Hierarchy and the

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- 1. Sader, *Dara*, 467-68; Duros, *Dara*, 533; Assemani, *BO*. II, 118-123; Baumstark, *Dara*, 62-71.
  - 2. Abramowski, *Tellmahré*; Palmer, *Chronicles*, pp. 85-221.
  - 3. Wright, pp. 204-5; Duval, pp. 318;390. Wright and Duval do not mention *De Oblatione*.
  - 4. Furlani gives the extracts of this work, see Furlani, *Dara*, 254-79.
  - 5. In some manuscripts this work has been attributed to John Maron. see, Sader, *Dara*, 467; Breydy, *Sacerdoce*. Zingerle gives a summary of this work. (see. Zingerle).
  - 6. Quotations are found in O. BRAUN, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Eschatologie in den syrischen Kirchen". *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 16 (1892), 273-91. see pp. 286-87. C. M. EDSMAN, "Death, Corruption and Eternal Life", *Bulletin of the Iranian Culture Foundation* I (1969), 85-104 (on Joh of Dara: Resurrection).

Some extracts are given by M.JUGIE, *Theologia dogmatica christianorum orientalium*, t.5 (1935), 784-86

Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Pseudo -Dionysius the Areopagite.(7)

(vi) An anaphora also is attributed to John of Dara. (8)

Among these works, only *De Oblatione* has been published so far. (9)

### **Treatise on the Eucharist or De Oblatione:**

The present translation is based on the Syriac Text published by Jean Sader in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (Vol. 308; Scriptores Syri 132). Sader has demonstrated the importance of *De Oblatione* in his study *Le lieu de culte et la messe syro - occidentale selon le "De Oblatione" de Jean de Dara* (OCA. 223, Rome, 1983).

Johns commentary lacks order. He does not comment on the rites in the order in which they appear in the liturgy. His interest was to give the symbolism of the liturgical rites, rather than to give an ordered commentary. Unlike other Syrian Orthodox commentators, John gives more informations about the pre-anaphora. This makes Johns commentary an important document in the study of the West Syrian eucharistic liturgy. The text that John used is an important witness to the developments that took place in St. James Liturgy between the time of Jacob of Edessa and that of Moses Bar Kepha.

I have refrained from giving detailed footnotes, mainly to limit the size of the book. I express my gratitude to Dr. Sebastian Brock of the Oxford University, who was very kind to check my translation and suggested valuable corrections. However, I am responsible for the errors or omissions.

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7. Strothmann, pp. 49-57

8. Aprem BARSOU (Patr) mentions the liturgy of John, Bishop of Dara (d. 860), see *Kitab-al-lu'lu'....* Eng. Tr. by Matti Issac MOOSA, Colombia University, 1965, p. 91.

9. see Sader, *Dara*, 467-68.



## INTRODUCTION

1. Trusting in the strength and help of God, we begin to write and to show from where did the *qurobo* come? And we say: from the natural law. These things (began with) Noah: when he sacrificed birds, God smelled the odour of the smoke and said: *I will not continue to strike the earth, but let it go on according to its proper order. (Gen.8:20-22)*. Similarly, after him, Abraham also, when he offered three oxen, goats, a pigeon and a young dove, there appeared a lamp passing between the two halves[...] God indicating to Abraham [...] that he shall [...] the divine [things]. Again [...] it was found [...] bread and wine[...] ; he was one of the believers from the gentiles, since he was a Cananean, not from the people of Israel.

2. And then, in the written law of Moses, it was the oxen, sheep, goats and lambs which were offered in a type.

3. Then God came and offered Himself as a living and holy sacrifice to His Father, in order to abolish all sacrifice of irrational (animals) by His own sacrifice, as the divine Solomon indicates about it, that by the blood of His Only Begotten, He will abolish all the sacrifices (p.2\*) and that His Son also will be accepted by Him. The former sacrifices removed the impurities, since it was their purpose. Similarly the effect of our divine sacrifice is the effacement of all shameful and abominable passions. Not only does it efface the passions which were once in us, but also it prevents possible future ones from occurring. Again, the effect of this sacrifice is to bring us into relationship with God and that we may be united with Him, and made equal

to the holy angels, (because) just as they receive Him spiritually, we also receive Him perceptibly.

Again the effect of this salvific sacrifice is to make us impassible and immortal, and also (it points to) the resurrection of the dead, as God Himself arose. Again as he pleased His Father, we also, by the reception of this sacrifice, please Christ, His Father and the Holy Spirit, as well as the angelic hosts who were formerly very much angered against us. And again, this divine sacrifice is an armour for us and a shield against the hostile powers, passions and their operations.

4. By whom was the *qurbono* given? By Christ. And when? After Pentecost, as Saint Basil and Saint Epiphanius have indicated. And on which day? On the third day of the week of the Pentecost. In fact, on the second day of the week, the holy apostles consecrated Myron in the upper-room, in which the Holy spirit descended upon the divine apostles-the upper-room belonged to Lazarus, one of the seventy evangelists - and then on the third day the *qurbo* was given by Christ. And first to whom? To Jacob, son of Joseph, called His brother, in agreement with (His) name, and as says (p.3\*) Saint John (of Constantinople), that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself entrusted it to Jacob from mouth to mouth, then Jacob to John the Evangelist. On the fourth day after the Pentecost, (John) offered (the *qurbo*) and communicated the mother of God, for he baptized her on the fourth day. He offered (the *qurbo*) to communicate her, for he was more pure than all other holy apostles. And where did John offer? In the upper-room, because it was in it that myron was (blessed), and the baptism of the apostles also (took place) as we have said above, and the



mother of God was baptized by John, and then Mary, sister of Lazarus, received her <sup>1</sup>

5. And then the saints assembled together in the upper-room without going to any other (place); but they were continuously inspired by the Holy Spirit, and by Him, they were speaking divine words which are elevated above the world, and the tongues of every race. And thus they fasted until the fiftieth day after Pentecost, from evening, to evening and each of them offered (the *qurobo*) now and then.<sup>2</sup>

6. And thus having completed their fasting, the holy apostles made regulations to cut the hair and to wash the feet mutually. Thus they established not to approach food, except these four things: bread, salt, vegetables and olives, without adding anything. They approached bread because, it was blessed by God when He took it in His hands, and also to remember continuously the Lord who ate with them; the salt, because the Holy Spirit[...] who is pure, and the vegetables[...] formerly[...] we were (p.4\*) because of it to the former people[...] against the hostile powers to whom their predication would be made, so that they may become strong and feebleness shall be removed from them. The olives, because the olive oil is (found) not only in its fruits, but also in its root. Therefore the divinity of God the Word is found in His whole humanity, without it having anything devoid of divinity. Similarly, the Holy Spirit was in the divine apostles or rather in the saintly believers, when they receive Him from the holy baptism. Again, they established to eat these four things, showing the four quarters where

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1. On the institution of the Eucharist, see Bar Salibi - Eucharist, 2:7; Book of Life, p. 120-21; Rahmani, Liturgies p. 283.
  2. John of Dara is one of the important witnesses to the existence of a 50 days Apostles fasting in the Syrian Church. on the apostles' fasting, see my study, Canonical Fasts, pp. 97-100.

they have to preach, that is the borders of the earth, that is the Holy Church.

7. After having established this decision, the holy apostles were dispersed on the whole earth, where the Holy Spirit led each of them. Thus they appeared continuously to each other and encouraged each other, not to be discouraged in tribulations and temptations, for by it they could imitate their Lord[.]. They took courage and strength against all tribulations and weariness: and this [...] knowing in them, when they suffered, they thought that the day in which they suffered is (a gift) from God. Thus they rejoiced in all the temptations and dangers, and they completed their life and combats in good old age.

Some of them preached until Jerusalem was captured by the Romans. This is known exactly from John the Evangelist (p.5\*) who preached for fifty years. The holy apostles did not see the destruction of Jerusalem, because all were crowned by the captivity. But John had ten years to preach after the pillage of the Romans and thus he ended his life in the city of Ephesus. Thus all the divine (apostles) departed towards their Lord, in combats full of victories and exploits: and behold, they intercede for the Holy Church and her sons. We beseech and intercede them this shall be done all the days of the earth, so that, the Holy Church may rejoice and exult in her children, when they shall attain impassibility and immortality, and thus inherit the Kingdom, which will not pass away, nor cease (to exist), and which is beyond all human senses, and which will belong perfectly to all the sons of the Holy Church, especially to those who have laboured in her and suffered happily for her.

(Here) ends the introduction which preceedes the *qurobo*, in summary.



## CHAPTER ONE

1. Thus, again the arrangement before the *qurobo*. How should be the presbyter or the deacon when they enter the divine sanctuary? And how shall be they dressed with their vestments? How shall they enter? And again the sanctuary, how shall be its decorations? And the *tablito*, how shall it be placed and be covered? And the table also, how shall its covering be? And the towels (*pothé*): how many shall be placed on it? And the priest, how shall he stand before the sanctuary? And also the deacon, how shall he stand, behave and cense? And all the arrangements of the sanctuary, how shall they be perfect and without fault? And about the paten and the chalice, and about the cover over them and about the anaphora (=veil) and about the curtain of the sanctuary and about all the vestments of priesthood and the stole: about the standing of the people in the churches, as well as about the standing of all ranks (of people) whether men, women, adolescents or infants, how shall be their way of behaviour in the holy church, so that their standing shall not be in a disorder which irritates God towards them, as He was irritated with Uzziah and made him a leper and (so) he was removed from kingship (2 Kgs.15:5). Therefore, it is necessary that we know this, so that we may escape from the punishment given to those who are not correct.

2. When presbyters or deacons wish to enter the divine sanctuary, especially on the occasion of the eucharist, which is (p.7\*) the divine sacrifice, first of all, they shall be pure from nocturnal pollution, both

perceptible and spiritual. Regarding the perceptible (pollution), that is the illusion of the night in a dream, the means that the demons use, so that they may cause sin by imagination. Those who wish to enter the divine sanctuary shall be carefully vigilant, by beseeching God to protect them from all faults of soul and body.<sup>1</sup> Regarding (the pollution) of the spirit: (this) corresponds to the foolish thoughts which continuously pollute the soul, as in the example of divine Moses, the god of Pharaoh (Ex.7:1) - he was so because he had authority over all to destroy or to give life; thus Moses had authority over Pharaoh to punish and to destroy him - he of whom we are speaking ever since God spoke to him, he did not approach (his wife) for carnal union of the body or of the spirit; but he was in great caution vis-à-vis his wife Sippora; he did not approach her even when he was earnestly solicited by her to have relations with her. He suffered thus until God wished to kill Moses, because of many reasons: firstly, he avoided circumcision; secondly so that Sippora should be frightened; for in the night in which God appeared to Moses and Sippora, Sippora had very much insisted that Moses shall have carnal union with her; but when Sippora knew it, she abstained henceforth, with a firm and clear decision, not to address him any more with that request to unite with her, because every day he used to speak with God. He did not even give sleep to his eyes, but he was in that (state) with earnest humility, because he feared lest he be defeated by the operation of the adversary by sleep and thus he would bring punishment on himself and on the people.

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1. For similar laws: Canons of the Testament of Our Lord, 1-3 in Synodicon, I, CSCO. 368, p.57; p. 229 (Jacob of Edessa); Bar Hebraeus, Nomocanon, 4:1-2.



(p.8\*) He remained in that state for forty years, until the last day of his life.

3. Thus, it is meet that the priest or the deacon, when they enter the divine sanctuary, wash their heads, hands and feet in a basin, which is placed in common for the (use of) all the holy faithful; their head, that is the intellect shall be washed in the common water, which is the holy water of baptism, which is common for all who wish to come near, by keeping the Holy Spirit and by not extinguishing it in them. By keeping it, they wash from the intellect the dusts of the body, namely the defilement and the foolish sores; and their feet, that is the life of the soul, which is manifested by anger, desire, rationality, so that anger should be always against every shameful thing, desire against everything impure, and desire things that are elevated, and rationality should become wise in everything which is divine and do not turn aside from that which is just and fitting.

4. Similarly, their hearts should be (away) from all hateful thoughts. Thus shall be their entry into the (divine sanctuary). But (if they enter) with a profane (spirit), they should realize that it will be for the condemnation of their soul and body that they make their (entry), for they did not distinguish the house of the sanctuary of the Lord from profane houses, and by this they are depriving the faithful also. Henceforth the word of the divine apostle has been fulfilled in them (p.9\*) which says: *God will destroy him, who destroys the temple of God* (1 Cor 3:17), the temples of God being the souls of the faithful. When the presbyters and the deacons do not enter the divine sanctuary with dignity, they are bringing condemnation upon the children

of the Holy Church. When they do [...] god destroys them, for they did not prevent the condemnation coming upon their companions because of their impurity. Again the word of the Lord is fulfilled, which says: *the impure sign of the desolation which stands in the holy place* (Dan.9:27; Mt.24:13), that is the priests and deacons, standing in the divine sanctuary, without being pure.

5. Likewise, their garments shall be placed at the door of the sanctuary, or the diakonikon (*bethshamshé*) which is the place where the priests and the people (stand). And then they leave their garments and cloth themselves with the vestments of the Church. By this, they show their renunciation of the worldly things and the perfect detachment from all mundane and corporeal things, and their stripping of the old man, who is composed of all things that are not in accordance with the Law.

6. Similarly, clothing with the vestments of the sanctuary symbolises the pure and holy and splendid vestments of the holy angels, whose vestment is impassibility, immortality and unlimitedness. Since the divine sanctuary is the dwelling place of God, and He Himself is impassible, those who wish to minister Him (shall be so), for it is impossible for the corporeal to minister the incorporeal God; for when we minister God, it is Him, who is incorporeal that we approach.

7. Then, when the presbyters and the deacons clothe with their vestments, they should recognize and understand that it is as though the body of God the Word, that they are clothing. As God the Word took our body, and by His ascension, He made it to enter before His father,



the priests and the deacons are clothing with their vestments (p.10\*), as though they are making the body of the Word to enter before the Father for a second time. Therefore, how greatly should they be in fear and trembling since, when the priests and the deacons enter the divine sanctuary without being pure, they are dressed with the sign of passions, those [...] who have come out of the holy of holies, which is the hiding place and the retreat of God?

8. But first of all, when the priest enters the holy of holies, his vestments should be white,<sup>2</sup> that is his senses should be pure from all adverse things which are harmful, and this will illuminate each of his senses.

9. Let the practice of (these things) be with fasting: that means, he shall not be attentive to low and secular things; he shall not approach a woman in carnal union.<sup>3</sup> That is, he shall be free from all shameful and abominable passions. When he has done these things, let him enter the holy of holies, which is a spiritual mountain; that is, it directs towards the mountains, which are the heavenly hosts, exalted above every creature.

10. Let the deacon do likewise, so that he shall be the one who purifies, according to his rank, for the deacon, by

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2. The traditional liturgical colour of the Syrian Orthodox Church was probably white. In the text of the liturgy of the consecration of Myron it is directed that the bishop shall wear white garments. See my study, *Onctions*, p.269, n.50. Sader, *Lieu de culte* p. 78-79. On the use of white garment in the early christian tradition, see, P. Prigent, *Apocalypse et liturgie*, Neuchâtel - Paris, 1964, pp. 27-29. see also, Cyril E. Pocknee, *Liturgical Vesture: Its Origin and Development*, Alcuin Tracts-30, Mowbray, 1960.

3. On fasting and sexual abstinence before communion, see *Synodicon*, I, xvi, p.139ff; *Bar Hebraeus*, *Nomocanon*, 4:2.

his name is interpreted as "he who purifies". And he has authority to be so over the catechumens, penitents and penitents and those who are dominated by passions as well as over those who are dominated by demons.<sup>4</sup>

11. (He has authority) over catechumens: that is, he was always (involved) in things which are harmful which He (God) did not suppress in Moses, who was rebellious and insubordinate, which happens always when these things are kept: he purifies his body from all passions which are destructive (p.11\*) and by it he purifies not only himself, but also those who are directed by him.

12. Then (over) the penitents and the penitents:<sup>5</sup> Let his city of refuge be always a city of refuge; that is in the humanity of God the Word in which he sought refuge firstly, [...] and it was for him [...] which oppresses him [...] the Devil. And the penitents [...] that is, which is not [...] in its beginning [...] but during his whole life, so that he shall be perfected in his purity.

13. And (authority) over those who are dominated by passions: that is, when the passions of the body come unexpectedly upon him, he should be in hard restraints, that means, by fasting and by constant prayers in day and night, by throwing himself down before the divine sanctuary and similarly by approaching the holy vessels,

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4. Bar Kepha (Eucharist, p.32-34) and Bar Salibi (Eucharist, ch. 5: 6-10) also speak of five groups of people who are dismissed.

5. "the Penitents and the penitents" probably means those who undergo severe and light penitence.

cfr. Bar Salibi, Eucharist, ch. 5:6. Bar Kepha also refers to two kinds of penitents (Eucharist, p.33).



he shall beseech Him who is offered in them to come for his help.

14. (He has authority) over those who are dominated by demons, that is when the demons subdue them by any passion, whether anger, lust, jealousy, calumny or illusion of night, he shall fight against them in an appropriate way; when he combats really, the divine power accompanies him. And thus he can be purified from all passions. He should combat against jealousy by detachment [...] of his body, if of the spirit: since he does not possess riches, he is not jealous with he who searches for more (riches); similarly, according to the spirit; when he does not think that he knows (p.12\*) something, or (thinking) that he did nothing, let him not oppose him who knows, or he who has a life of activity; and when lust contents with him, he has fastings, sweats and thorns on the earth to withhold it.

15. [...] the catechumens, that is [...] who are [...] so that he may pass from a [lesser] conduct [...], (to) that which is more elevated, as says David: *they will go from strength to strength* (Ps.84:7), that is, from one virtue to another virtue which is more elevated than it.

16. The presbyter should be a light in everything that is his, and nothing obscure should be found in him. But like a prototype adorned with all (kinds of) different and brilliant colours, his manners shall be dignified, analogous to the manners of the heavenly hosts, that is, by their qualities, especially by those in the image of which they are made.

17. Let him have, first of all, the quality of Seraphims,

who are the first to be in participating in the divinity of the Holy Trinity. As the Seraphims are incandescent and fiery, he (shall participate) in the divine fire of which our Lord said to His disciples: *I came to cast fire upon earth, and would like that it were already kindled !* (Lk.12:49). He called His divinity "fire" which was truly the destroyer of all sins from the whole of the human race, and which could destroy the thorns and the weeds that had sprouted from the earth symbolising the passions, of which the principle would be in the soul and in the body, which are customs (p.13\*) of total lawlessness. Likewise, he (shall have) also the light of the fire, the light being the gifts brought from the divinity upon all those who are pure, like the celestial powers, in matters that are visible; and by these they will destroy from themselves all suckers of the old man, which are the suckers of the members of the flesh which the divine apostle indicates, being fornication, adultery and all the rest that he indicates (Col.3:5)

18. Similarly, he should have the quality of the Cherubims, which consists of the abundance of wisdom and knowledge: that is to say, he shall be wise, and shall not turn away from that which is needed and (he shall have) the knowledge to discern, whether it be according to his nature, or according to his rank. According to his nature, because he is from the earth; according to his rank, because he is called the angel of the Lord, and this is because of his disposition by which he searches out the mysteries..

19. Again, he should be like the Thrones, that is, he shall be a resting place for the Holy Spirit, rather for the Father and the Holy spirit. Again, what (characterizes) the



Throne, is that it avoids wandering, that is the toil over earthly things and illegitimate things.

20. Again, he should be like the Lordships, that is, he should keep away from every (kind of) slavery, which is the service of those who are distant from God - that is when we are engaged in vain work, thinking that we are doing (a work) of God.

21. Thus he should be also like the Dominions, that is to say, to have authority over the house of the divine mysteries, and to be the head of the servants, as Jacob was the head of Esau, who was a servant.

22. (p.14\*) And he should be like the Powers, that is, he should remain always in the divine power that God gave to His holy disciples, *to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy* (Lk.10:19)

23. Similarly, he should be also like the Principalities, that is, as the divine image is the head of all creatures, the priest shall be the head over all manners that are low and mean. Again, as the head is placed above the body, at the most elevated part, the presbyter, by his excellent manners, shall be above all the children of the holy church; he should be a model for the true faithful and thus they shall look upon him and he shall be an asset for them.

24. Again he should be like the Archangels, that is, he be head over the mysteries from God, instituted by God for the holy faithfully, and he shall be more perfect in manifesting (them) than the deacon.

25. Again, he should be like the divinizing angels, that

means, as the angels are appointed to be the guardians of men, more than all other celestial orders, the presbyter should be the guardian of the faithful who are guided by him more than all other orders, whether race, family or acquaintance.

26. [...] and when he shall have all these things, he will have the confidence to stand before God and to ask for favours [...] on behalf of the faithful [...] when they enter [...] the sanctuary [...] christian [...]. First of all let them offer to God supplications before God that they have suffered and committed as men. While considering that they not even worthy to tread upon the holy premises, but while being unworthy, they are approaching the divine mysteries (p.15\*), on behalf of the children of the faithful Church. Then by doing this, let them ask forgiveness of their brethren and companions, their superiors or their inferiors, for the Holy Spirit is reconciled when we have reconciled with our brothers with a gentle and humble spirit. And also the holy angels, when they see the presbyters and the deacons do this [...] for the Holy Trinity, they shall become [...] exalted actions [...] what (?) [...] the Dominions, and in the holiness [...] and when they [...]. [26bis] And these things [...] towards the corners (?) of the divine sanctuary their right hand in [...], thus with sorrow [...] when they are offered to us.

27. But the people shall be known in various (degrees), when each of the degrees is manifested and known [...] so that they may be of double benefit [...] when they are enlightened by them to the complete [...] so that they shall [...] by [...].



28. Likewise, the young men, when they are illuminated by them in the evil of the body [...] so that they work with force.

29. Likewise, the adolescents, by keeping away the (type) of the youth and the reprehensible passions from them, so that the divine word which says *Adolescent, be illuminated and you shall receive a good spirit* (Wis.8:19), may be fulfilled in them.

30. Likewise, the younger boys shall be clothed with modesty and chastity and all the manners of virtue.

31. And the infants shall be brought up by their parents in all the orderliness necessary for infants to stand in the church: that is, their parents should fix their spiritual attention (p.16\*) on that infant, who was our Lord Jesus Christ, by submitting to the divine yoke from their infancy.

32. The order of women, who are in wedlock, that is married: let their object of emulation shall be the saintly women whose glory was proclaimed at all times, that is Sara and Rebecca, who left their country and their family, and attached to their husbands, and God, because of their modesty, honoured their sons after them, namely the people of Israel to whom god gave the Kingdoms of the gentiles, because of the honour of their parents.

33. Thus the virgins also: let their order in the church be like the example of Mary, daughter of Joachim, who gave birth to God, when she was staying in the Temple of God with all the ornaments of the virtues, that became Christ

- and He became not only before the priests and before His angels - she in whom, because of her good works like these, God descended and dwelt. Therefore, when the virgins stand adorned with virtues, the Only Begotten of the Father, God the Word descends and dwells in them.

34. But now we have spoken about the arrangement of the different groups in the Holy Church, how they shall be in the Church; let us now come to the mysteries of the Church; we shall explain and interpret each of them, as far as possible, considering each of the orders that are in it, so that the symbolism of the holy things shall be more (clearly) known, to the extent that the Holy Spirit has granted (the grace) to understand, and to make (them) understood to all those who love God and who love knowledge.

## CHAPTER TWO

1. Again the commentary of the *qurobo* and all its ordering; of the sanctuary and its arrangements and of all its rites; of the curtain and its vestments; and all its secret and visible customs; and of all the vestments in it whether of the priests or of the deacons; likewise, also of the nave and of all its arrangement, of the group of choirs of the psalmists and singers: particularly, in brief, of all that should appear in the holy Church - and this is in accordance with an examination of the divine and orthodox doctors, pillars and illuminators of the Church of God, by whose mediation, she had the deliverance from destructive wild beasts, and who have laid its foundation upon the unshakable rock, who is Christ: by whom they were exalted and crowned, and towards whom they have gone and with whom is their pleasure, because of the spoils they have brought to the holy Church.

2. Why does in the holy Church, has it been established that there shall be a sanctuary and a *questromo*<sup>1</sup> that is the middle part, between the sanctuary and the nave, and similarly a nave? This is because, the tent of Israel was constructed by Moses with three parts, that is the holy of holies, which is the sanctuary, the place of the ministers, which is the nave, and the court which

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1. Questromo is the space between the nave and the sanctuary. It is sometimes separated from the nave by a railing and one step. Originally it signified the step in front of the sanctuary. See. Codrington, *Studies* p.6. cfr. Sader, *Lieu de culte*, p.41-43. On the arrangement of the church, see, Codrington, p.2-8; Sader, pp. 37-49.



surrounded the nave and the holy of holies. The people stood in the court, priests and deacons in the place of ministers, which is the nave; and (in) the holy of holies which is the sanctuary only Aaron to minister (p.18\*) and Moses would enter alone, without Aaron, to be mystically instructed by the Lord, when He told him about the people and about his direction.

3. The holy of holies shows the Church of the Seraphims, Cherubims and the Thrones; the *gestromo*, the Church of the Lordships, Dominions and the Powers; the nave, the Church of the principalities and the Archangels, and the court the holy Church. This is because, all which were in the law of Moses are in the Holy Church, which are established so that their arrangement shall be triple. But also because, it has three gifts, namely perfection, illumination and purity. The perfection by its perfect creation, that is by the image and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and by illumination, that is by privation of ignorance, because it existed entirely in the divine knowledge. And by the purity, that is, by the holy baptism, she was purified from all sins, defilements and wounds. Again when man sinned, he sinned in a triple (way): by the soul, by the body and by the mind. But when God came, he saved him in a triple (way): that is, by the mind, because He pardoned (him) [...] the image; the soul was (taken) so that it shall become an intermediary between the mind and the body; for without soul, it is impossible to have a union of the mind with the body. The body was taken so that the divinity may not be seen and by this means the adversary might mistake (Him), and come to fight with God and thus he be overcome, and the human race be rescued from his



hands. That is why the church is arranged in three parts: since the Church is for man and man was triply saved, it is meet that there should be three parts in Church also.

4. (p.19\*) Why is there a separation between the holy of holies and the *gestromo*, the nave and the court which surrounds? This is because, the dwelling places of the perfect are separated from those of the just; of the just from those of the righteous; of the righteous from those of the penitents. The perfect are those who had not sinned and defiled themselves by sin in their whole life. The just are those who had given to their body what is necessary for it, that is, that which keeps it in the suitable manner; the righteous are those who had made just by their virtuous ways of life, as well as those who had been sanctified by their (own) blood. The penitents are those who are engaged in toils and sweat for that which have suffered before, because of (their) feebleness.

5. Why is the Church set out to receive everyone who comes to her and to gather together all who are dispersed? This is because she holds the type of God. As God calls everyone to Him by His loving kindness - this is known by (His) patience towards transgressors and sinners, not to destroy them, but He looks to them so that they may repent and turn towards Him, always, during the whole time of the world, good and wicked; and just as God gather together all towards Him, that is (both) the good and the wicked, the good for His kingdom and the wicked for the gehenna, which is the end of all; similarly, the Holy Church which is a type to God will gather together all who are dispersed.

6. Why has a door been established for the nave and the sanctuary, but it has not been established for the *gestromo*? And it has been prescribed that all faithful shall enter by the door of the nave, but that, (the door) of the sanctuary shall not be for all, but only for the priests. The door of the nave is established for everyone of the faithful. By this, it is signified exactly that the door of the nave indicates the loving kindness and the goodness of Good, who in this world (p.20\*) receives anyone who approaches (Him), without judging him for the acts that he had done, but is patient in this world towards every class: towards the righteous, who are judged and persecuted by their enemies, and also towards the tyrants who fulfill their will on them by their evil deeds.

Then, that the door of the sanctuary is not for everybody to enter, for it indicates the coming world - where it will not be given to those who are nominal Christians to enter the dwelling places of the Kingdom, which will be impassibility, immortality for those who have spent their life in true faith, and in the works of 'athleticism' <sup>2</sup> until they became worthy of grasping the corners of the altar (cf.Ps.118:27; Rev.9:13)

The *gestromo* without door symbolises the rank of small infants, who are not like the righteous, nor like the unrighteous; since they have not laboured in the spiritual vineyard of the Church, nor they have sinned to be like the wicked; but by grace, they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven; and since the doors of the heaven are not closed before them, the *gestromo* (also) does not have a door.

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2. that is "the life of martyrs".



7. The table of the sanctuary is of wood; that of the people of Israel was of wood inside, but outside, it was covered with gold. In Israel, the gold and the wood symbolised the union of the divinity with the humanity. Then, the ark covered with gold inside and outside, symbolised the holy mother of God, Mary. The gold outside (symbolised) the impassibility that the saint possessed, which was removed from all luxury and immodesty of women. The gold inside indicated the Holy Spirit who was going to dwell (p.21\*) with all her hidden (parts). Again the gold outside (symbolised) the divinity of the Word of God, which did not leave Him when He was manifested. And (the gold) which was inside (symbolised) that, when He descended among the dead, (the divinity) did not leave Him, as wicked Nestorius said that it left Him. Again the wood covered with gold, symbolised the body of Adam itself, the gold was the divinity of the (second) Adam, the Only Begotten Word of God, by which the body of Adam which had sinned was covered, and this was (accomplished) by God who consented to suffer and to die on behalf of him.

(The table) of the holy Church is from wood only, indicating mystically here that, as the wood is destroyed by fire, the body of the Word offered on it shall destroy all sins and lawlessness incurred by the true faithful of the Church. Again, as a tree sprouts and flowers and receives water (litt: drinks) from above and from below, God shall raise the dead to a blessed life, all who piously receive His body and blood. That the tree receives water from above and from below: as a tree, when it is cut, is deprived, from all sides, that is, of the gifts of the angels which are from above, and from below (of the gift) that the earth should



give him fruits without labour and sweat, (that is) bread to eat, and he was even deprived of the animals being submitted to him. But when God came and took on Him all which humanity was indebted, and restored the tree deprived of its growth, that is to the Paradise where he was in the beginning, and He gave him to drink from below, that is the waters of baptism by which we grow and ascend towards above and produce divine fruits, which are the virtuous manners (p.22\*) beloved to God. Then from above, (He gave him) the bread of the holy angels (Ps. 77:25) so that the human beings eat it as said David; that is the Word of God whom the angels receive spiritually, and we receive Him in a perceptible way; and as we receive Him by the sense and by the spirit, here the drink was double.

8. Then, what is the symbolism of the table, of the *tablito* and the vessels (placed) on it? First of all, there shall be a covering on the table, absolutely free from wool, and it shall be either of linen or of the product of worm, that is silk. Then, let the *tablito* be (placed) over the covering, and then let a napkin (*shushupo*) be over the *tablito*, so that no part of the *tablito* shall be seen. Then the vessels, in which the divine body and the purifying blood are placed, shall be placed over the napkin; and then a veil (*tahpitho*) which is the anaphora shall be placed over them. And again eight pieces of cloth shall be placed on the table, two on each side; and these pieces placed on the corners of the divine table, indicate mysteriously the body of Adam, which was formed by the divine hands. That (the table) shall be in the middle of the sanctuary, indicated that (Adam) was placed in the middle of the world, on the Mount Nebo, that is Jerusalem, which is the centre of the earth. Again, the table shall be

in the middle of the sanctuary, because when Adam was created, he was placed in the middle, that is he was from the angels in that he was without body, as far as his soul was concerned, and he was like the sensible creatures as far as the body was concerned, and again, because the Second Adam, the Word of God is the intermediary between the Father and the Spirit.

9. (p.23\*) (Concerning) the fact that the sanctuary is the symbol of the Paradise: it is not of that (Paradise) which is sensible, but of that which is spiritual,, beyond any sensibility or passibility.

The priests and the deacons in the (sanctuary), are the symbol of the celestial armies who surround God. The priests, when assembled in the sanctuary with he who offers the eucharist, symbolise the angel who appeared to our Lord Jesus Christ, and strengthened Him at the time of passion, for when the priests and deacons assemble in the divine sanctuary with him who offers the eucharist, they strengthen and help him.

10. (The reason) that there shall be on the priestly table a napkin free from wool is the following: the napkin on the table indicates the ignorance imposed on Adam who did not know the wood, that is the tree in the middle of the Paradise, and this is because it was not helpful for him, as he was not yet capable because of his infancy.

That the napkin shall be of linen and not of wool: it is because, for the most part the linen, by its nature, is not stained, or eaten by worms because of its coldness, and its whiteness ressembles snow. Thus was man before he



sinned, for according to his creation, he was not easily stained by evil thoughts, nor vulnerable to be corrupted by shameful passions. That the linen shall have the whiteness which resembles the snow (signifies) that in the beginning man was far from every (sort of) blackness which has entered in us by sin, and that by the gifts of the Holy Spirit his being was renewed, so that by the lights of his intellect, he shall see and know the hidden things. The coldness of the linen indicates the divine life that man possessed in the beginning, so that he could destroy and reject all the flames of the passions which came upon him (p.24\*)

That there shall be no napkin of wool on the table: when man had sinned, his vestment was a tunic, in which there was wool; that means, after having committed sin, man resembled wool, that is, he was disposed to be coloured with all (sorts of ) faults and be corrupted by the shameful passions and be defiled like wool, that is by death, so that his sin shall be known by the separation of the soul and the body and thus completely be effaced from man.

(The reason) that a napkin of silk shall be on the table of the sanctuary is again the same: the silk is by its nature not corrupted, and it lasts for long time. The silk is from worm, so far as, when the worm produces silk, it has to die. Thus the spiritual worm, which is the body of God the Word, when it produced the silk - that is, the souls of the holy fathers from the dark depths of Sheol - for before the salvic cross, all the souls of the fathers were placed in the darkness - when God the Word came, who is called "worm" by the prophet David (cfr. Ps.22:6), he brought them out of dejection in which they were placed; this is clearly known from the book of Gospels which says: many bodies of the



saints were raised and they entered Jerusalem (Mt.27:52). And as the worm dies when it produces this material, so when He brought out the dejected from their darkness, God died, so that by His death, He could deliver all the mortals from the corruptive death, whose concern was to corrupt the souls.

Again this worm lays its eggs before it dies and it is gathered and put carefully kept in a vase; (p.25\*) when the month of Nisan (=April) comes and when the seeds are warmed, suddenly it makes the worms to germinate because of the warmth which comes upon it. Similarly, the holy father also, the righteous and the just, before leaving the world (have left) their seeds behind them, that is the practice and the theory. The practice is that they sanctified their sons like Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the divine prophets. And the theory is the confession of the Holy Trinity, and thus they slept in their dust until the month of Nisan, in which God suffered, died and descended towards them, to the abode of the dead and they experienced His warmth, that is His divinity, and thus they were quickened and arose, glorifying Him in their tombs; for all the dead experienced Him; but all who were looking for God during their life, were awakened from their sleep, because of His descent towards them, and *they glorified Him on their beds* (Ps.149:5), that is on their dust, as says the divine prophet David.

Again it is the same worm that is praised, as says the prophet, saying as though in the person of God the Word: *I am a worm and not a man* (Ps.22:6). That is, as the worm that germinates from the wood is without semen, God the Word took upon Him to be a worm, so far as He

was lacking the semen of a man; that means, it is not by semen that God took it upon Him, but that from the Holy Spirit, His birth should take place.

(The reason) that a napkin of linen should be on the table and under the *tablito*: it indicates the piece of linen of which the four corners were bound, which descend from heaven until the earth, and which contained the unclean animals and the unclean reptiles; it symbolises (p.26\*) the preaching of the gospels, which was bound by the four evangelists to the four quarters. The *tablito* is the cross; they visibly bore the salvific cross (and) exalted it before the gentiles and the tyrant kings and the children of Israel, without being ashamed of it.

11. That (the *tablito*) should be covered with a veil, symbolises the veil Moses put over his face,<sup>3</sup> because he became shining by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the sons of Israel could not look at him, for they did not have the holiness and chastity of Moses to look at his face. Similarly, the holy Church also has spread a veil over the *tablito* so that, those who are not pure shall not see, nor know that which is hidden on the *tablito*. The veil spread over the *tablito* also shows the veil put over the holes pierced in the hands, feet and the opening of the side of our Lord Jesus Christ, similarly over the celestial armies also secrecy and covering was imposed, so that they should not see the passions that God took upon Him.

Similarly, just as the *tablito* is visible when the veil is raised, so our Lord Jesus Christ is going to raise, by His

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3. Ex. 34:29-35; 2 Cor. 3:13-16.



passion, the veil which is ignorance, by the resurrection from the dead, to show clearly all people, what He had suffered from the sons of Israel and the sons of Israel shall be judged (p.27\*) according to their faults, and shall be tormented with the Accuser and his armies. Then the word of the divine prophet Zechariah will be fulfilled which says: *They shall look on him whom they have pierced* (Zech 12:10; Jn 19:37), and in the Gospels his words will be made known: *The land shall mourn, tribes by tribes, the tribe of the family of Nathan* (Zach 12:12), that means, the tribes of Israel, all shall mourn together, when they see that He whom they had crucified and pierced with nails is God, without any profit.

12. That the paten and the chalice should be placed on the veil, above the *tablito*, symbolises the superior essences and the celestial powers by whom God is sanctified and glorified. (The reason) that the vessels of the mysteries shall be different - some being of gold, or others of silver, precious stones, crystal or of tin - is because when God is received by the children of the Holy Church, they do not receive Him in the same way, but some of them approach Him like gold, that is as perfect ones, and some of them like silver, (that is) as righteous and just; others like crystal, that is, as those who have kept the Holy Spirit whom they have received in baptism, and who have not profaned Him in themselves, and others like precious stones, that is like scholarly doctors who made divine words to come out to light namely to understanding, from the veils of darkness, and who were illuminated themselves and illuminated others; the tin (indicates) those who receive Him while being feeble. Therefore it has been ordered that



in the Holy Church; there shall be different and symbolic vessels.

13. The chosen breads (*prisotho*) which are placed in the paten,<sup>4</sup> one separated from the other, and each of the chosen bread divided into many particles symbolise the blessed abodes that God will give to His elect. That with signs (*rûšhmé*) (p. 28\*) each of (the bread) shall be divided into (many) particles, symbolises the different gifts of each of the abode, and that according to the different works of holy men, God wishes to recompense all His elect ones with justice.

14. The paten here symbolises Eden, which has been called Eden because of its numerous gifts, that is, being superior and full of all kinds of desirable and spiritual goodnesses. Then the chalice symbolises here the depth and the infinitude of the divine nature. The wine in it symbolises the delights, the rejoicing and the fullness of goodness that God shall give to all of His labourers. Similarly, again the wine put in the 'depth' of the chalice symbolises that which God will reveal to His elect in the new world, as far as possible, regarding His hiddenness and His (in)comprehensibility, for it is a kingdom beyond *vision, heart and audition*, as God said to His holy apostles (1 Cor. 2:9).

15. What is anaphora? The anaphora over the mysteries symbolises the types and the shadows placed from of old over the economy of God, which were to function

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4. John of Dara refers to the custom of offering more than one bread, that is according to the number of communicants. cfr. Bar Salibi, *Eucharist*, 6:1.

for the salvation of men. Again, the anaphora indicates the word of the divine prophet David: *He made darkness. His covering and it has surrounded His tent* (Ps. 18:11). *Darkness His covering* is the ignorance of all, (by which) none of His creatures knows what is the composition of God the Word, that is of the divinity with the humanity.

The anaphora also symbolises the inability given by God to all to know how the bread and the wine become the body and blood of God. It symbolises also (p.29\*) the darkness which was placed on the Accuser and his armies and on all men so that they do not recognize that our Lord Jesus Christ was truly God until the cross. Again the anaphora symbolises that the Holy Spirit was hidden, and was not known until the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ, (when) He descended upon Him in the form of a dove. The anaphora symbolises also the ignorance that was placed on all human race, with the result that they did not know God, and thus they were turned towards idolatry. The anaphora symbolises also the rock which was placed at the door of the tomb.

It is raised above the Mysteries, and raised three times by three priests, that is by the celebrant, by (he who is on) the south and by (he who is on) the north. That the celebrant raises first is a symbol of God the Word, who by His sacrifice raised the types and shadows from all creatures, and 'removed' also ignorance from all men, so that might know that He is God and it is He Himself who is truly the Son of the Father eternally, and not the people of Israel who thought that he is son.

Then it is raised from the west, and from the south,



and from the north. It is raised from the west, because God came towards the west, that is towards all who are in the darkness: again from the west, to show that the darkness has been 'raised' from the Romans. Then from the south: similarly the veil was raised from the sons of Ham, who are the Egyptians and the Indians (*hendwoyé* = *the Ethiopians*) (cf. Gen. 10:6), as says the divine prophet David: *Kush shall stretch out the hand to God* (Ps 68:31). Then from the north: the veil was raised from the magi, who are from the north, for Persia, when understood clearly, is to the north of Jerusalem; they were enlightened by a star which was Gabriel their master, by whose mediation (p.30\*) they were illuminated, so that they could have the knowledge of a king who is God, born in Jerusalem.

That the anaphora should not be raised from the east: that is the eastern side is the type of the holy angels, who do not have the veil of ignorance. As the east is always luminous, the celestial powers are always in light; and they have never forgotten Him, or renounced Him, but they confess that the Son is equal to His Father in eternity and in everything, except in property and in hypostasis; the property of the Father is called non-generation, which is not (that) of the Son; the generation which belongs to the Son, does not belong to the Father. Similarly, the hypostasis of the Father does not belong to the Son, as generation does not belong to the Father - and these angels confess that the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are equal in everything, except in properties and in hypostases. Therefore, it is not meet to raise the anaphora from the east, on account of the things that we have said.



16. That there should be priests to the south and the north to raise the anaphora with the priest who celebrates: The priest who (stands) in the south is the symbol of Michael, who was the ruler over Israel, and who raised the veil from those who were faithful among the people of Israel, like the holy apostles and numerous faithful who were from Israel. That there should be a priest to the north, is the symbol of Gabriel who was the ruler of northerners, who are the magi, for he (Gabriel) was the one who set the Magi aright so that they might come to God. That the anaphora should be lifted up three times indicates (p.31\*) that in the written law, the darkness of idolatry has been lifted up and that it was known that the Father is Father and is God over everything; that in the law of the Gospels, or in the cross, it was known that the Son is the Son of God, and that at Pentecost, it is known that the Holy Spirit is the One who proceeds from the Father and that He is God.

17. The place of the deacon is behind the presbyter and that of the people is behind the deacon. That the deacon should be behind the presbyter, symbolises the holy angels who are standing behind God, without daring to search into His nature and His operations.

The fact that he proclaims and says: *Let us stand well* symbolises here the mountain on which the Accuser and all his armies fell, and the faithful behind him symbolise the holy angels who did not fall with the Accuser and his armies. Because the angelic armies who were not the leaders thought that all the angels were fallen, the archangels began to cry out in the whole Church and to say to those who were not fallen: *Let us stand well*, that means

before Him who is good, that is (before) God, let us have our standing. The faithful who hear it are the symbol of all the angels who had listened to their leaders and did not fall with those, who revolted against God.

The words: *with fear* : Let us fear the Creator lest we be rejected from the blessed dwelling of divinisation, and be like the corporeal beings, that is to be turned towards lowly and foolish things.

The words: *let us stand with modesty*: having reverence towards our Creator, who brought us to existence, while we were not existing, and when we came to being, He gave us access to Him through the intellect.

The words: *Let us stand with splendour*: Let us be elevated in splendour, that it the divine gifts; towards our Creator, and let us thus understand our (true) being (l-yoto) and not fall down.

(p.32\*) The words: *Let us stand in love and in true faith*: Let our standing be in love, for *God is love* (1Jn 4:8;16): Let us be established in the divine nature, for, as God cannot think of lowly things, but of exalted things, thus we also, once established in God, our mind should think of exalted things.

The words: *with true faith*: let us believe that God is transcendent and is omnipotent, and that He is the Head and the Lord of all that exist, and that He is the Truth and the True and that everything which is outside of Him, is reckoned feeble when compared to Him.

18. Let us look spiritually at this holy anaphora which



is before us: not as it appears corporeally should we conceive its mystery, but let us understand in the first instance, the removing of all ignorance that happened to us by the incarnation of God the Word. Again the anaphora that is lifted up is over the body of Adam, which was lifted up on the cross, above all the human tribes. Again the anaphora which is lifted up and then received by the priest with a kiss, symbolises the body of God the Word which was lifted up to heaven towards the Father, and received by the angels of heaven with a kiss, that is the confession.

That the anaphora should be folded by the priests, and not by the deacons: the folding symbolises the contraction and the protection (*mkanputho*). Thus when God the Word appeared to the celestial armies in the flesh which He had taken from us, He was hidden and protected from them by the priests and the celebrants, who are the Cherumbims and the Seraphims, because as He was elevated from the Seraphims towards His Father, He did not again appear to them in the flesh as He has appeared before. Therefore, the anaphora shall be folded by the priests and not by the deacons.

19. (p.33\*) Again, regarding the pieces of clothes: the table should have eight (pieces), and one shall know that there are two on each side. The pieces of clothes symbolise the priesthood, for the priest was the one having the ephod. Similarly our Lord Jesus Christ appeared among us in swaddling clothes, that is to say, to exercise the priestly ministry for us.

The first piece of cloth is (the symbol of) His conception, the conception by which He sanctified all who have been conceived.



The second piece of cloth is (the symbol of) His birth, by which He sanctified all who have been born.

The third piece of cloth is (the symbol of) His growth, by which He sanctified all who are grown.

The fourth piece of cloth is (the symbol of) His dwelling with men, by which He sanctified all who dwell upon the earth.

The fifth piece of cloth is (the symbol of) His baptism, by which He attracted the Holy Spirit upon all those against whom the Holy Spirit had been irritated.

The sixth piece of cloth is (the symbol of) His fasting, by which He purified the four elements and the senses.

The seventh piece of cloth is (the symbol of) His passion and death, by which He abolished the shameful passions of all those subject to passions.

The eighth piece of cloth is (the symbol of) His resurrection from the dead, by which the reconciliation between the Father and human beings properly was effected.

Now, when we understand that the table is the body of Adam himself, and that these actions of which we said before, are related to him, it is meet that there shall be eight pieces of clothes on the table of the Mysteries.

20. That there shall be a girdle (*esoro*) on the table and above the vessels, symbolising the Holy Spirit who descended in the divine baptism (p.34\*), by whom all the

faithful are bound to Him and each other, and moreover with the Father and with His Son, because without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to be bound with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. The tie (*asirutho*) of the table shows that we shall be bound to God through death, and not through enjoyments and pleasures, but through sufferings and dangers. The tie also symbolises that when the eucharist is celebrated, the holy angels assemble near the divine sacrifice.

21. That the incense should be placed on the table, symbolises the divine actions which are granted to the children of the Holy Church, and thus all the filthiness of sin and its passions shall be removed from them.

That when the bishop celebrates the Eucharist, there should be a metal (censor) on the table - metal means (it should) be of silver or covered with gold - showing that the bishop is instructed and elevated in the words of the prophets, which are like silver, and in the words of the apostles which are compared to gold, and by means of these words he is able to introduce the souls of the faithful into the secrecy of the divinity, which acts as perfume for all who approach it. The incense symbolises also that the bishop will introduce his flock before Christ with confidence in the day of judgement, when it will be made fragrant with the Holy Spirit that it has received by baptism, and having no filth in it; and with a voice of triumph (p.35\*) he will cry out before Christ and say: *Behold me, and the children whom Thou hast given me* (Heb. 2:13; Is 8:17-18).

Then the fire in the censor and the smoke symbolise the holy apostles; the fire (indicates) the gift of the Holy



(Spirit) which is in them; the smoke, the preaching of the Gospels which they (=apostles) announced and by it they have rooted out the filthiness of the idolatry from humanity. That is why the divine apostle cried out and said: *We have this treasure in an earthen vessel* (2 Cor 4:7), that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit which was in the body of the holy apostles.

22. Again, as the holy of holies of Israel had two cherubims above the ark, there shall be on the holy table of the divine Church two fans (*marwahotho*) on the priestly table, which do not leave it.<sup>5</sup> These fans show by it the type of the cherubims and the seraphims who had not depart from the proximity of the divine nature.

23. Why (are there) the lamps in the sanctuary? They symbolise the splendid light which is neither extinguished nor disappears from those who are near to God; this (refers) first of all to be fiery armies. The lamps symbolise also the priests and the deacons from whom the spiritual illumination proceeds for all the children of the Church.

24. Why is there the reading of the prophets, apostles and the Gospels in the Church? The reading of the prophets symbolises the labours and sweats that the holy fathers and the prophets offered in order to see the incarnated Word of God, and similarly the supplications which they offer for the human race, so that God may come and save it from the hands of the enemy.

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5. This would imply that the fans were placed on the altar when they are not used. The normal practice was that two deacons wave them during the celebration.



(p.36\*) (The reading) of the apostles symbolises the supplications which they offered for them to Christ so that He may come to their succour and to their aid in the combats and dangers that they suffered from the tyrants; they beseeched also their Lord according to what He had promised them, saying: *Behold, I am with you until the end of the world* (Mt. 28:20). Therefore, when the apostles, that is their doctrine is read, the same supplication is made to Christ so that He shall be with the heads of the Church and with her children until the end of the world. The holy apostles feared about the Church lest Christ abandon and destroy her as He destroyed the community of Israel. That is why the divine prophet David cries out saying: *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry* (Ps 2:11), that is: he says to the heads and the sons of the Church that their deeds shall be right by the holy faith and, by the right actions, and thus you may avoid rejection from the proximity of God.

Then (the reading) of the Gospels marvellously symbolises what the Son had said to His Father for the sake of His holy apostles, when He wished to ascend towards Him: *My Father, keep them, as I have done, I have kept them all* (Jn. 17:11ff). Similarly, it indicates also the word that our Lord Jesus Christ had said: *where I am, there shall my servant be also* (Jn 12:26). Again, when the holy Gospel is read, it is God Himself who speaks to His Church and says: *Behold, I have put your marks (rushmé) on the palms of my hands* (Is 49:16), and you shall rejoice with me and with my angels. Again, as the Son, in His economy, sanctified all who approached Him, so, when the words of our Lord are read, they sanctify all who listen to them. Again (p.37\*) the Gospel shall be read in the evening and

the morning of Sunday, so that what He has done in the evening and morning shall be manifested clearly, for it was on Sunday that the heaven and the earth were created, and it is the first among the days. The reading of the Gospels, therefore, clearly indicates that the Son is man and God above all.

25. The psalmody of David chanted in the Church symbolises the ten theories. As all the books of the prophets and the apostles speak according to the ten theories and he (David) speaks solely according to the ten (theories), when David is chanted, it is as though all the divine books are read; that is why it is arranged to be chanted always.

26. What is 'purificator' (mkaprono). The 'purificator' is the womb of the holy Virgin, by which all the wombs were cleansed from all impurities and defilements. That the priest takes it in his hands and cleans the fingers of his hands with it, symbolises the ten senses that the Holy (Virgin) had purified from all lowly things and that is why, her purity is above (that of) all the human race.

27. Why is there a sponge? The sponge is the holy body of the Church, which absorbs, more than all other bodies, the spiritual waters upon which the Holy Spirit descends. The sponge also symbolises the bodies which are deprived of God; and like the sponge when it approaches water, immediately absorbs it completely, the bodies of the holy fathers (p.38\*) when they perceived that God had descended towards them, they believed perfectly that He is God, consubstantial with His Father.

Again the 'purificator' is and it symbolises the



resurrection from the dead. As the sponge is completely dry when deprived of humidity, the bodies deprived of soul become exactly dust. And like the sponge, when water approaches, immediately becomes moist from its dryness, so the bodies of the dead which hear the voice of the holy angels will be raised together as in a flick of the hand and *in a twinkling of an eye* (1 Cor 15:52); and as the sponge when it is squeezed regains its nature, the bodies of the saints which had lived in this world in great combats and torments, and whose bodies were burned with fire, sword, and beasts and whose members were mutilated and broken by tyrants; there God will remove sores and sufferings from them and then they will be renewed and they will become spiritual beings like the celestial armies.

28. Why is a spoon placed on the mystical table? The spoon symbolises the Holy Spirit, through whom we receive the body of God the Word. The spoon symbolises also the nature of the holy angels, who are the first to know the hiddenness and the protection of God. The spoon again symbolises the hand of God which took the dust and formed and made man.

29. (p.39\*) Why does the priest take the chosen bread (*pristho*) in his hands and mark with the sign of the cross and not break it? The sign of the cross is for the word of the holy prophets which has prophesied about the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(The priest) raises his hands above, holding the chosen bread: this symbolises the ascension of God the Word towards His Father.



Why does the priest not break the body at (the time) of the descent of the Holy Spirit which is its perfection? It is not broken because He was not killed when the Holy Spirit descended upon the body of God the Word in Jordan, and (because) as being perfect, He did not wish to be delivered Himself to be crucified. And for what reason? Firstly, because He had to fight against the adversary and to defeat him, as the adversary fought against Adam and defeated him. Secondly, God had to defeat the adversary in a double manner: by His combat with him and by His crucifixion, so that He could repay the debt on behalf of Adam and Eve, that both of them were indebted (to pay).

The fact that there is an interval between the Holy Spirit, that is His descent and the fraction, symbolises the time in which (Christ) did miracles, before being handed over Himself to be crucified. Therefore, the priest brakes (the bread) after some time.<sup>6</sup>

The priest traces with a half of the bread two crosses (on the other half), and then he joins the (two) halves by turning to the right the half on which the sign of the crosses were made, then he takes it and marks one cross. The division of the chosen bread symbolises the separation of His soul from the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. That the first half should have two crosses symbolises the salvation which was effected in a double manner (p.40\*) by the salvific cross for the people and for the gentiles. That there should be only one cross on the other half, symbolises the salvation which was effected for the dead who became one by the death, for all men are equal whether good or wicked,

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6. see the description of the fraction by Bar Kepha, Eucharist, p. 67 ff.

by the separation of the soul from the body and by (the fact) that (the body) has become dust and dissolved. That the left side of the chosen bread should be turned towards the right, symbolises the reversal made by men from the state of left to right.

Then the (two) halves of the chosen bread are joined together: The joining of the (two) separated halves symbolises the union of the angels with men by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. That they are separated (symbolises) that the angels, even though they are equal and united with men by the faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, they are separated from men by nature and properties. The (two) halves joined and then separated (symbolise) the union of the perfect, of the righteous and the just in the divine blessed state; that at the end, they should be broken into small pieces (symbolises) that, eventhough they are destined to be in the kingdom of heaven, their dwelling places are, however, different from each other in the kingdom of heaven.

That one particle (*gmurtho*) should be taken and put in the chalice: the particle put in the chalice symbolises God the Word, who was taken away from the angels and from men to die, for the chalice here symbolises the death of Him (who) by His own will, was pleased to descend into Sheol by (His) death to save the dead.

Again we see that the chalice and the body are being three; (that is) the chalice is a mixture of wine and water, and the body is one. The chalice which is from two elements symbolise the divinity (p.41\*) and the soul, both being incorporeal, and the body indicates the resurrection from the dead, signifying that all (the three) are united together.



The fact that when the priest wishes to take the particle, (and) if another priest is present, it is meet that he gives it to the celebrant, symbolises that the celebrant is like God the Word, who offered Himself to His Father; the fact that the other priest gives the particle to the celebrant, symbolises the Father who raised His Son, by the will of the Son from the dead, as the divine apostle said: *God raised our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Cor. 6:14) from the dead, the divine apostle pointed out the equality of will between the two, which was (also) distinct, because, the Son raised Himself, but it was said (here) that the Father raised His Only begotten, for the Father is the cause of the Son and because of the relationship of the cause to the caused, that is the Son, it was set down (here) the Father raised Him from the dead.

30. Why are the body and the blood covered with the pieces of clothes when the *qurbono* is completed? Because it is meet that the mysteries shall be thus covered and again given covered; this symbolises that God the Word is hidden and is in secrecy with His Father, and that when He sees that the earthly creatures are beseeching Him with purity and holiness, He shall manifest (Himself) to them by His great mercy and visit them by the gift of His body and blood. That the body and the blood of our Lord should be covered also symbolises His body which was hidden in the tomb and when the blood and the water came down from His side on the cross, it was also hidden in the earth; by the blood, He showed that He was living and by the water, He was dead.

(p.42\*) And what happened to the blood and water that flowed down from the side of our Lord towards the



earth? Were they lost? If not, what happened to them? Since when man and woman are united, each of them provides what he has - the semen of man is water, whereas the semen of women is blood - and since man and woman (mutually) complete by the sin, God disposed to save both together by this, so that the blood shall flow on the body of woman and the water on the bones of Adam - that is, it was on his dust that the water flowed - so that both of them might be saved.

Again, blood and water flowed from the side of our Lord, so that it may be clearly symbolised that His coming took place for the living and the dead: by the blood He visited the living, who were the fathers, and the prophets who lived with their souls, that is with deeds of virtues, which they possessed throughout their lives; and then by the water: those who were dead in the sin, that is who had given themselves to wicked deeds by practising idolatry and the passions, it is by the water that they had their salvation; in that water is for the salvation of the dead.

31. But what does the veil of the holy sanctuary show us? For the veil shall be as follows: when the divine body is broken, the veil shall be closed; when the fraction is completed, the veil shall be opened; when the divine body is consumed by the priests and the deacons, it shall be again closed; and when the eucharist is finished, again the veil shall be closed likewise.

(p.43\*) That there should be a veil in (front of) the sanctuary, symbolises the separation and the distance existing between God and the angels; similarly, the distinction that exists between (various) orders.

(The reason) that the veil shall be closed when the divine body is broken is the following: the divine body when broken, symbolises the death of God on the cross. That the veil shall be closed symbolises the veil which was put over the celestial armies, so that they might not see God when He was crucified, for the holy angels would not be able to bear to see God suffering. Since none of the insensible creatures could bear it - that is, the sun became dark, the earth shook and was opened and the rocks also were split - how could those who are incorporeal and are near to God bear it?

Then, that the veil shall be opened after the fraction symbolises that, after the cross, the veil was removed from the angels and men and they understood that He who was crucified is God above all.

That when the priests and the deacons receive the divine body and blood, the divine veil should also be closed, symbolises that when God gave His body and His blood in the upper-room to His holy apostles, He gave them secretly without anybody observing it. Again, the veil is closed when the priests consume the divine body and blood, indicating that when God the Father gave His Son to be incarnated, absolutely none of the holy angels, nor anybody else noticed it, except the Angel Gabriel, who brought the news (p.44\*) from His Lord to the Virgin Mary, and the holy Virgin too who was going to give birth to God the Word.

That the veil should be opened when the priests take the eucharist, indicates that the angels receive God first and then men; the incorporated powers receive Him first, because of their proximity with God.



32. When they bring out the divine body and the blood to the people, the chalice, that is the blood, should leave first. The fact that the blood leaves first symbolises the death of God - it is known that blood proceeds first from he who dies: since God died, His blood shall leave first and then His body.

The fact that when the body and the blood leave towards the people, the males should receive it (first) and then the women, symbolises that God visits first the strong, mighty and the valiant and makes them to approach Him, and then those who are feeble in practices of virtues, represented by women.

33. The return of the Mysteries into the sanctuary symbolises the inseparability of the Son with the Father; because, even though He was manifested and dwelt with us, and accomplished His economy with us, He was with His Father without being separated (from Him).

The body should be kept if there is some left over, but the blood which remains (p.45\*) should be administered; and it is not permitted the chalice should be (kept) except for one night, and then it should be administered on the following day. This shows that when God the Word was known in the obscurity of the one Law, only what concerns Moses was known, that is, He was known by types and shadows; and then when the law of the Gospels was established, all (these) were completely abolished; also He was among the dead in the night of Sabbath and He was risen in the night of Sunday. That the chalice should be (kept) for only one night, and then it should be administered, is because God took (only) one body from us,



and He did not leave it behind, and nothing at all was left of it. Then, as the chalice when it is administered, (the content of) the chalice is not known. Similarly when God the Word fulfilled the ministry for our salvation, He did Himself and was not known. Similarly when God the Word fulfilled the ministry for our salvation, He did Himself and was not known, whereas He was visible in the body and He abolished and destroyed the irreprehensible passions - which He took for us - from the body which He took and this was (realized) after His resurrection. The body which remains shows that the body of God the Word passed the night in incorruptibility among the dead, according to the word of David, which he addressed to the Father: *You have not given up Your Saint to see corruption* (Ps. 16:10).

The mysteries which are covered symbolise the new world, when all corporeal things shall be taken away from the Church and all together shall belong to the Holy Spirit, so that men shall become spiritual beings.

34. That there shall be a benediction after the reception of the Mysteries, indicates that each time when we receive the body of God the Word, we are abundantly blessed by Him, and that we are driving away the curse that came upon us. That it should be the priest who is entrusted (with this), indicates that the pure priests entrust the souls of the faithful to God with purity.

35. (p.46\*) The commentary of *qurobo* is finished: (the commentary) of all its orderings, its rites, and all its materials that are found in it, its entrances and its coming outs, and the beginnings of all its actions and their end: as far as their understanding is possible. End.

## CHAPTER THREE

1. (p.47\*) Again the commentary of the arrangements of the prayers of the *qurobo* and their texts, and what is the mystery of each of its prayers, and about the prayers said with inclinations, and about all the signs of the crosses that are made during the *qurobo*, and about the canons that the deacon proclaims, and about the *katholiki* or the proclamation, and about the requisite supplications. These things need to be understood, so that in the knowledge of them shall be our strength, and we may not become like the people of Israel who did not understand the mysteries of the types, and were rejected, for they did not know them.

2. Beginning of the entrance to the eucharist: first of all, there shall be a *sedro* of penitence<sup>1</sup> and then the *ma'nitho* of the entrance,<sup>2</sup> that is (the entrance) into the holy church, and then there shall be a second *sedro* of the entrance, and then the creed.

The first *sedro* symbolises the mosaic law regarding the faults, the impurities of the nocturnal illusions and the

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1. On the origin of Sedra and its place in the Syrian Liturgy, see, SADER, *Lieu de culte*, pp. 83-89. John of Dara is the first west syrian writer to mention this sedra. Bar Kepha and George of the Arabs are silent about it.
  2. on *ma'nitô* (= response; anthem), Sader, *Lieu de culte*, p. 89-90. According to Sader, this refers to the so called ho Monogenis or Ihîdôyo attributed to Severus of Antioch (512-18). But this is not certain. The oldest reference to Ihîdôyo is found in a 10th century manuscript (BM. Add. 14496). But its attribution to Severus is found only later manuscripts. I think that John of Dara refers to a *ma'nito* similar to Ihîdôyo.



touching of a dead or of bones; the second *sedro* of the entrance symbolises those who took refuge in a village of refuge.

Again, the first *sedro* symbolises those who took refuge in the villages of refuge in the south of Jordan, where the sons of Reuben, Gad and the half of the tribe of Manasseh took refuge. The second *sedro* symbolises those who took refuge (p.48\*) in the villages of refuge of the land of Palestine, this side of Jordan (cfr. Dt.4:41ff; Jos. 20:2ff).

Again the first *sedro* symbolises those who were purified by baptism, without labour (from their part), from all their sins and defects; the second *sedro* symbolises those who have sinned after the baptism and those to whom the forgiveness was granted because of their labours and sweat.

That the *ma'nitho* should follow the first *sedro* symbolises the repose of the holy angels, whose satisfaction was great, when forgiveness was (granted) to the human race by the holy baptism.

That the creed should follow the second *sedro* symbolises the Gospel law, which demanded faith from all those who wished to be baptised - namely, the faith in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit - without which, they would not have been received in any way.

3. Regarding the creed, the following is its origin as it is said now in the Church. In the beginning it was not like this that it was recited, but it was proclaimed by the faithful (as follows): *We confess the Father, who is the Begetter and the cause, and the Son who is the Begotten and*



*the caused, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and is the caused from Him.* Thus the faithful proclaimed three times in the Church. When came up the folly of Arius, who was the chief of the presbyters of Alexandria, - he appeared as if he were pious and he was known to be a philoponos, that is keeping the monastic life, whereas he was far removed from it - thus this miserable man found a way of saying that the Son is a creature coming from the Father. When he confessed like this, the Church was troubled because of this impiety.

Again as Constantine, the victorious Emperor was reigning, through a firm and strict order, he gathered the synod of the 318 bishops (p.49\*), in the city of Nicea, twelve miles away from Constantinople; and the victorious king made (the decision) that there shall be a synod in Nicea, for most of the leaders and the people were sick with the disease of Arius, especially the citizens of Constantinople. And as the wicked man combatted craftily against the synod for his impious opinion, he did it with mediocrity by two writings that he wrote: one was placed in his hand and the other inside in his breast. In that which was in his hand, it was written: "I Arius, confess that the Son is equal in essence with His Father, and in everything the Son is equal with the Father except in property and in Person", and in that which was placed inside in his breast, it was written: "I Arius, confess that the Son is a creature of the Father, and is distinct from Him in nature". And this abominable man, standing before the bishops and holding in his hand, the writing which contained the orthodox faith, and showing it to the bishops, proclaimed aloud and said: "I confess what is written in this writing", the miserable

by beating on his breast, where he placed the writing, whereas the bishops did not remark this cunning.

Alexander, bishop of Constantinople did not believe that the wicked man confessed rightly, and immediately he ran to the divine sanctuary and fell down before the table of the mysteries, putting sackcloth on his body and ashes on his head, he beseeched Christ with groaning and said: "I shall not leave this place, I shall not remove this sackcloth and the ashes, and (p.50\*) I shall not at all approach to the ministry of Your mysteries until I know, whether Arius confesses (the faith) truly". And as the saint laboured with repeated tears and groanings, Arius was leaving the bishops, boasting before the bishops, then, by an act of God who pleases to mock the cunning and the insincere, he went to a latrine, that is, the place for bodily needs, and then the whole of interior was emptied. When this happened, the news reached the bishops, (the news) that Arius had received a just retribution from (God) and also the letter was found on him, in which he denied that the Son is the Son of the Father. Then, they called Alexander, bishop of Constantinople and said to him: "Rise why are you prostrating, for God had heard your prayer; this has happened to Arius, your enemy, in a fully despised place". Then having heard this, he stood up with great joy.<sup>3</sup>

And thus all the bishops agreed to make the symbol of the holy and orthodox faith. And having established this symbol of faith, about which it shall be clearly known

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3. The story of the death of Arius is given in the Greek version of the life of Jacob of Nisibis. See, Theodoret de Cyr, *Historie des moines de Syrie*, I, *Sources chrétiennes*, 234 (Paris, 1977), I, 10 (= p.183). On the source of this story, *ibid.* p. 179. n.6.



below, they wrote this symbol until it is said: *and in the Holy Spirit*, for there were many who were sick regarding the Holy Spirit (by saying) that He was not God.

But the end of this faith, that is this symbol, was made in the synod of the 150 which met in Constantinople, which rejected the impiety of Macedonius, who denied that Holy Spirit is God. This symbol (p.51\*) was passed to each of the bishops, and each of them said that he believes (it): and when the symbol had passed to them all, they all cried out together and said: *We believe in One God*. Henceforth, the celebrant shall say: *I believe in One God*. And thus was the enactment of this word regarding the holy faith. End.

4a. commentary on *We believe in One God*, and this as far as possible to have understanding and illumination, that can be revealed by the commentary.<sup>4</sup>

4b. *We believe in One God, Almighty*. The (words) *We believe* is (there) so that we shall distinguish the faith from that which is not correct: again, because the human race was formerly believing in numerous and different idols; similarly in the holy Church, there were different corrupt heresies, which according to their appellations worshipped the idols, that is the bodies.

Like the impious Arius who said that the Son is a creature of the Father, and he worshipped Him after the Father, and if the Son is a creature of the Father and he offered Him worship, consequently he was worshipping the Son, not God.

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4. For a discussion of the characteristics of the creed commented by John, see, Sader, *Lieu de Culte*, p. 100-103.



Similarly, also Sabellius the Lybian: he said that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one person, and he offered them worship. But if Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one person and each of the persons wishes to establish what He is - and if the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are of one person, consequently the Father left His paternity to become the Son, and the Son left His sonship to become the Father and the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit left procession to become the Son and the Father. And this is not possible, for consequently one is saying that there is no Trinity. Therefore, Sabellius is confessing a different Trinity (p.52\*) which is a creature. Therefore, it was to a creature that the worship of Sabellius (was offered), and he has been counted with the idolaters.

Similarly the impious Nestorius also, who is (his) confession found (a way) to say that, when Christ did miracles, the divinity was in Him, but when He did not do miracles, He was deprived of divinity and was a simple man. But if He was a simple man and he worshipped Him, then Nestorius was worshipping a man. And thus (with) all the heresies.

4c. The words *in One God* are to show that there is only one God, the cause of the caused, whether those which are equal (to Him) in essence, or those which are distinct from Him in essence; the (equals) in essence: the Son and the Spirit; equal in essence, that means, (equal in) nature to the Father; the Son and the Spirit are equal to the Father in nature, who is their Principle, without being anterior or posterior.

4d. The words *the Father Almighty*, means He who

holds all elements and all their structures by His power, because, if God in a twinkling of the eye, withdraws (His) hands from all, - whether those which are inferior to all; from the individual or general (beings), like [...] or those which are superior to all, like the celestial powers - it would be impossible for them to continue to exist.

4e. *Creator of the heaven and the earth*: As by His word the heavens were created, it is known that the heaven and the earth are His creation and that as they are creations, they will not remain, but by Him who is their Creator, that is God, who does not have "a then when He was not" and who will not have "a now when He is not".

4f. *And of all things visible and invisible*: Since it is said *creator of the heaven and the earth*, which are the visible things, it is to show by *visible things*, those which are invisible (p.53\*), which are of two (kinds): that is, the angelic orders and among the things from below, the souls and the demons, that have become evil by their will, and so have become inferior.

Again: the visible things in this world and the invisible things in the coming world of which He is the creator. Again, *visible things*: those which are living; *invisible things*, the dead.

4g. *And in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God*: the words *in One Lord Jesus Christ* demonstrate, regarding the person of the Only Begotten Son that the Son is distinct from the Father in Person, eventhough He is equal to the Father in (their) common nature.



The word *Lord*: In the same way as the Father is Lord, the Son also is Lord and Master, that means, by His hands everything was created.

*Jesus Christ: Jesus*, as he became the saviour of all rational and irrational (beings); the rational, like the human beings whom He saved from sin and its operations; the irrational, as (He saved) the oxen, the sheep, the lambs and the birds from the mosaic sacrifice.

*Christ*, as distinct from those who are anointed in Christ. He is the Christ, the Son of the Father, who anointed His humanity with His divinity.

*The Only Begotten Son of God: Only Begotten*, as He is distinct from the people of Israel who were called *My son*, *My first-born, Israel* (Ex. 4:22); but when He is called *Only Begotten*, (that means): He who is equal in nature with His Father, (and) He who is God like His Father.

*Son of God*: In the same way as God the Father is (p.54\*) infinite, incomprehensible and inscrutable, the Son also has all these (qualities).

4h. *Begotten of the Father before all ages*, that is, from a father as among us, by paternity, and not as regards (human) nature which is living, rational and mortal; there is no anteriority or posteriority; but when we say 'father', necessarily (we say) 'son' also, and when we say 'son', necessarily (we say) also 'father'. Same is (true) regarding the Holy Trinity by nature: when (we say) 'Father', necessarily (we say) also 'Son', even though there is no anteriority or posteriority.

The words *Begotten before all ages*: not (because) there shall be a beginning for the generation which is said to be from the Father, but because, among us, those who have an anteriority to all are called 'the first' - that is, first, the world of the angels and second that of men. And since nothing is anterior to them, it is said that by generation, God the Word is anterior to them in that He is having neither beginning nor end.

4i. *Light from Light*: the Father is the Light, that is, as He revealed (His presence) to Moses in the form of fire; thus again, when Israel left Egypt, He appeared in the form of a pillar (of fire) (Ex. 13:21f). And since, it is to the Father that the things which were seen by Israel have been attributed, they shall be (similarly attributed) to the Son also, for because the Son is from the Father, and He must be consubstantial to Him, like Him, whether by igneous nature or by luminosity, that which is light. Similarly, the Son also has said: *I came to cast fire upon the earth* (Lk. 12:49) and *I am the light of the world* (Jn. 8:12). Again in the same way as the Father brought Israel from the darkness of the Egyptians, (the Son) brought the spiritual Israel from the darkness of sin. And, in the same way as the Father raised the dead from death, that is darkness - and this by the holy prophets (p.55\*): first by Elijah (IKg 17:22), and second by Elisha (2Kg 4:35) and third by Isaiah (Is 38:5?)- God the Word also raised Lazarus and the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow, and gave the same (power) to His holy apostles.

4j. *True God from true God*: True God is the Father, who does not pass away nor is He dissolved, and is the Creator of all that exists, and not those who are falsely



called (gods), while not being gods, like stones, wood and the demons. As the Father is true God, the Son is also true God, especially by the things He did amongst us, that is He became one of us except in sin, and saved us and gave us His body and His blood as a pledge, to confirm what He said regarding the promises which are beyond (the reach) of the senses, *which has been promised to give to those who love Him* (James 1:12).

4k. *Begotten, not made, consubstantial with His Father*: He was truly born from the Holy Mother of God, Mary, that is there was a real birth, but not a creation as in the case of Adam, nor like his children (who come) out of the womb, that is from a semen. But He formed a body for Him in the womb of the Holy Virgin Mary, by the intervention of the Holy Spirit.

The words *consubstantial with His Father*, that is equal in nature, in will and in operation.

4l. *Through Him all things came to be*: by the hands of the Son, with the will of the Father, and (with) His (will), that is, by His word, the heaven and the earth (were made), and by the breath of His mouth all the powers.

4m. *Who on behalf of us human beings came down from heaven*: because in His incomprehensible mercy, He wished to save His image (p.56\*), He came from the high place to the depth, from hiddenness to manifestation, from exaltation to low estate, to save His creature from the error of the rebellious demons.

4n. *Who took body from the Holy Spirit*: firstly, the Holy Spirit is His kindred, that is equal (to Him) in nature

and in eternity; then by the intervention of the Holy Spirit, He took for Himself, that is He formed, as He (only) knows, a body by the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the Virgin, without defiling, nor corrupting the seal by a rupture, as it happens to the seals by child birth.

4o. *And became man*: He took a soul, a body and a mind - (this is said), because of those who say that by the body which God took from us, He did not take a mind, for the divinity fulfilled the (functions) of the mind. [...] the impious [...] [...]. But, if a mind was not taken, He did not save (it), because it was the mind which sinned first, and caused the soul and the body to sin. Therefore, if mind was not taken, it was not at all saved, and consequently neither were the soul and the body (and) then God did not become incarnate. But if God was incarnated, He took a mind which He saved; and if He took a mind, then He took soul and body; consequently they are completely saved.

4p. *In the days of Pontius Pilate*: He names the judge and his place (of origin); the judge is Pilate and his place Pontus. (This is) to have two witnesses to witness according to the Law of Moses, which prescribed that there shall be two or three. Thus three appeared, that is with his wife, who sent him (a message): *Nothing (should be) between you and this righteous man*. Similarly, the place also witnesses: the place by the intervention of the centurion whose place was (also) Pontus.

4q. *And suffered and died and was buried and rose again*: suffered is against the docetics (p.57\*) who say that God did not suffer, but He was seen and perceived in phantasy (to have suffered). Again, *suffered*, is to show that



by the irreprehensible passions that God assumed, He destroyed the abominable (and) reprehensible passions from Adam. And (*He*) died: to become salvation for all who have died in sin. *He was buried and rose again*: He was buried by Joseph the counsellor, who wrapped Him in a piece of fine linen and laid Him in a sarcophagus of new stone. *He rose again*: in the same way as He gave Himself to die, He raised Himself to die, He raised Himself in incorruptibility, with the will of the Father and of the Spirit.

4r. *On the third day, as it is written*: On the third day, as said the divine prophet Hosea in the person of the Son, (addressing) the Father: *He has stricken me and He will heal me; He has broken me, and He will bind me up; and on the third day He will raise me up; and revive me before Him (Hos 6:1f)*. As it is written, that is by the divine prophet Hosea.

4s. *ascended into heaven*: that is, to make to ascend the first fruit that He took from us, that is His body, to reconcile the human race with His Father who was formerly irritated against all men on earth.

4t. *and sits at the right hand of His Father*: that is, He sits at the right hand by His incarnation, in the same way as before He was elevated with His Father, in eternity, (it was) so in His humanity, without being diminished from what He was.

4u. *And will come (again) in His glory to judge the living and the dead*: (*He*) will come in His glory, that is, the body which He took from us. Again, (*He*) will come in

*His glory*, that is by manifesting the sufferings He took upon Himself so that His side would be opened, and His hands and His feet be pierced. Again *(He) will come* (p.58\*) *in (His) glory*, that is with His cross, carried by the angels before Him in pomp.

Again, *He will come in (His) glory*, that is as God having the power to give life and to destroy, that is to give life to those who keep His commandments, and to destroy those who have renounced Him, either by (renouncing) the faith - those who were not willing to believe in Him - or while believing in Him, renounced Him by their deeds, for they were not willing to accept virtuous manners, namely chastity, holiness, purity and others which resemble these (virtues) and (which) follow them.

4v. *His kingdom shall have no end*. Unlike the kingdom of this world which passes away, the kingdom of God is not destined to pass away: but as God does not pass away, so His kingdom does not pass away; and similarly all the righteous and the just, when they reach the kingdom of God, their joy does not cease and their happiness does not end.

4w. *And is the one living Holy Spirit, who is Lord and Life-giver of all*: As the Father is one Person, the Son also is one Person and the Holy Spirit is one Person, as one among them.

*Who is Lord and Life-giver of all*: He gave life to all, and this is known exactly by what is said in the book of Genesis: *the Spirit of God was brooding over the waters* (Gen 1:1). Similarly, He is also descending in the holy



baptism and it is by Him that all the baptised are given life.

4x. *Who proceeds from the Father and with the Father and with the Son is worshipped and glorified: who proceeds from the Father:* to show that even though the Son and the Spirit are from the Father, and the Father is the cause of the Son and the Spirit, the caused are, however, distinct from each other, that is the Son from the Spirit and the Spirit (p.59\*) from the Son; they are distinct in Person, because the Person of the Son is not that of the Holy Spirit, nor is (the person) of the Holy Spirit that of the Son, but each of them is an individual Person.

*With the Father and with the Son is worshipped and glorified:* In the same way as the Father and the Son are worshipped, for they are God, the Holy Spirit is worshipped with them because He is Lord and God, like the Father and the Son. *And is glorified:* He is glorified by all those who know and understand that He is Creator..... He has (...) as one among them.

4y. *Who spoke through the Prophets and the Apostles; and through the one apostolic Church:* He spoke through the prophets, because it was He who inspired the prophets, and thus says Solomon the wise: *the Spirit of the Lord has filled the universe* (Wis 1:7); thus the divine prophet Ezekiel also says: *The hand of the Lord was upon me and the Lord has brought me out by the Spirit* (Ex 37:1); similarly again: *And the powerful Spirit which rends the mountain and breaks the rocks* (1Kg 19:11).

*And through the Apostles:* Inside the upper-room, when they spoke in the language of all race(s).

*And through the one apostolic Church: and through the one Church,* for many heretical (groups) are called "churches", but the Holy Spirit did not speak through them and does not speak through them. *The Church* also indicates those who were after the apostles: as the Spirit spoke through the apostles, (He spoke) also through their sons.

*Apostolic:* she has completely put off the old man with all his manners.

4z. *Catholic:* that is, she gathers in from all peoples, *and glorified:* she will be glorified by Christ in the new world (and) by all His angels.

4aa. (p.60\*) *We confess only one baptism:* even though many baptisms are spoken of, that of the Holy Spirit is the only one by which we become the sons of God.

*for the remission of sins:* When we confess that the Holy Spirit is God, our sins are truly forgiven by Him.

4bb. *And we look for the resurrection of the dead:* When we confess Him (the Holy Spirit), He is with us and He does not separate in any way from us and by Him we shall arise from the dead.

4cc. *And for the new life for the world to come, Amen.* Even though He is with us here, and we are in a new life, when we are superior to the body and to its passions, in the new world we will become more His (own), that is spiritual beings, *where there is no Greek, no barbarian, no slave and no free man* (Gal 3:28), but all will be free, completely freed from the Accuser and his acts.



*Amen, that is left it shall be to you, the sons of the Holy Church.*

5. Finished is the commentary of the *qurobo*, not commented in scolia, but passing phrase by phrase with a commentary in which we have not left out any text, as far as possible.

## CHAPTER FOUR

1. Again, about the prayers, the cross and the symbolism of the attitude of the priest and the deacon; about the canons and the *ghonoto* of the priest and also of the deacon and the proclamations; and about *the angel of peace and concord*, and about the prayer *Our Father who art in heaven*.

2. The first prayer symbolises the Church below, where the holy angels intercede with those who are above them for men, the Church above (consisting) of the angels, that is of the Lordships.<sup>1</sup>

The second prayer is to supplicate the second Church to offer intercession to the Church above, which is to be recognized in the Seraphims, Cherubims and the Thrones. That the place of deacon (shall be) behind the priest, symbolises the angel Gabriel, who is nearer to men than all other angels, who intercedes with those who are above him for the children of the Holy Church.

Then the third prayer symbolises the Church interceding three times with God, because when the priest speaks, it is as though he speaks to God; because the symbolism of the priest is (evoking) the order of the

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1. Here John comments on the "Three prayers" said at the beginning of the anaphora. Jacob of Edessa (+708) is the first west syrian writer to mention these prayers.

See, Letter to Thomas the Presbyter, Syriac text in Assemani, BO.I, pp. 479-86; English translation, F.E. Brightman, LEW. I, p.491. cfr. Bar Salibi, Eucharist, ch. 3.



Seraphims, who are nearer to God than all (other) celestial powers.

(p.62\*) The first prayer is completed symbolising the peace which existed in the beginning between the angels and men, and which was then transmitted by the mediation of the angels to all the celestial powers.

3. During the third prayer the anaphora is raised,<sup>2</sup> symbolising that, when the third powers, that is the Seraphims, interceed with God, everything which is covered and hidden is immediately raised up, and then its light is visibly transmitted to all the powers, to each one according to his rank.

4. Then the priest says: *The Love of God the Father*, and then he makes a sign of the cross on himself, then he says: *the grace of the only Begotten Son* and he makes a sign of the cross on his left side and then *our Lord and our Saviour Jesus Christ* and he makes another sign of the cross on the people.

That the priest says: *Love of God the Father*, and makes a sign of the cross on himself symbolises: when the priest (says): *the love of God the Father*, it (indicates) that by His great and ineffable love, the Father gave His Son to die for the human race, in order to save it; that the priest makes the sign of the cross on himself symbolises that God *bore the cross till He left the city* (cfr. Hb 13:12).

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2. The anaphora was raised by the priests, see. ch. 2:16. In the commentary of George of the Arabs, it is the deacons who raise it. Severus of Antioch says that in Palestine and in Jerusalem, it was the deacons who lift up the veil. cfr. Letter 105: To Caesarea the Hypatissa, PO. XIV, p. 256-58.

That he says: *the grace of the Only Begotten Son*, and then makes a sign of the cross on his left side, that is the north, symbolises the grace of the Son, who has equality with His Father - not because those who were in the north were worthy, who had been deprived of light, and were placed in a profound darkness - but by his salvific cross, the Lord God illuminated them.

(p.63\*) That he should make a sign of the cross on his right side symbolises that God the Word, by His cross has caused to pass to the right all who were on left.

That he shall make a sign of the cross towards west symbolises that the dead, who left this world in obscurity and are deprived of light, were also saved by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. That the priest should say: *Let our minds and hearts be up above* symbolises that, if it is by the cross that our salvation was realized, we should be there, where He who was crucified on the cross is, that is, as the Son who was attached to the cross is in heaven, the mind (*hawno*), which is (His) image should be in heaven. Similarly, *the hearts of all of us*, that is our spirits and thoughts.

That the people should respond and say: *we have them towards the Lord*, means: we have the sacrifice which has been taken from us, [...] which is the body of God the Word.

6. That the priest says: *let us give thanks to the Lord with fear* means: Let us give thanks with fear; as His name is upon us, who are called Christians, let us do what is



worthy of Christianity and let us be in fear, because of the name that is upon us, not to be Christians by name but strangers from Christ by our deeds, seeing that we do not observe *His traces*, but our activities consists in mean deeds.

(p.64\*) That the people say: *it is meet and right*, symbolises that God is worthy that we offer Him purity, holiness and all kinds of virtues which are His repose, as He Himself had done for us without demanding recompense for His cross, apart from that of which we have spoken.

7. That the priest says the prayers secretly: *it is truly meet and right*: God is worthy (to be glorified) not only by those who are living, but also by those who are dead; for God, when He came to save, He saved the living and the dead and therefore He is worthy to be honoured by both.

8. That the priest rises and says the prayer: *to Him, whom the heavens of heaven and all their powers glorify*: The heaven indicates the celestial powers which are below; the heavens of heaven: the Church which is above, that of the Thrones, Cheru'bims and the Seraphims; *who glorify Him*: that is each of them according to His order; similarly men also shall glorify Him, each one according to rank.

9. That the priest inclines and says: *Truly, You are Holy, King of the ages and giver of all holiness*: that is, *truly You are Holy* shows that, as the Father is Holy, the Son also, who is from Him, with His Holy Spirit. *King of the ages* is to show the resurrection from the dead.

10. That the priest says, standing up: *as He, who was*

*without sin, was about to receive voluntary death for us, sinners, shows that, as God took on the irreprehensible passions and death, for those who were dead by the reprehensible passions, the priests should do the same thing; by giving themselves for (p.65\*) the salvation of all flesh that exists, so that the divine image may be manifest in them.*

11. That the priest says: *We remember, O Lord Your death and Your resurrection on the third day from the dead and Your ascension:* We should remember the death that God died, symbolising that just as when God died He caused to die with Him death and all sin, and that *nothing (of sin) was seen in Him* (2 Cor 5:21), so too therefore, when we leave the world, there will be nothing of the mortality of the corruption in us, but we shall be found completely away from the world and from those which are in it, so that we should [...] be in every glorious virtue.

12. Then that the priest says: *and we when we remember Your grace and the giving of thanks:* The priest shows that the sons of the Holy Church do not interrupt the remembrance of the death of Our Lord; similarly also, because of the grace that He has done for us by our salvation.

13. That the priest inclines and invokes the Holy Spirit is that: the priest indicates the descent (litt: invocation) of (the Holy Spirit) towards Christ, the Spirit who descends towards us, by His grace, descended upon Him in the form of a dove and it shows that, as Christ was pure etc, He too should be in the things of which we have spoken.



14. The priest strikes with his hand his breast or the forehead three times and says: *Have mercy upon us O Lord!*, and all the people answer three times *Kyrie elesion*.

That the priest, in the descent of the Holy Spirit, strikes upon his forehead symbolises that, in the beginning, the sin flourished in three places: mind, soul and body, (p.66\*) but when man was saved, his salvation was threefold: his mind was completely freed; his soul was sublimely and (his) body was purely preserved. Since sin flourished, especially in the mind, the priest strikes three times, showing by it that the Holy Spirit will descend, manifest and dwell in these places which were impure before. By these three times, he shows also that when the Holy Spirit visits the Holy Church, He manifests His operation first of all in a three fold way: to those who make perfect, then to those who illuminate and then in those who purify, who labour in the ministry of the Holy Church.

That the people say three times *Kyrie eleison* symbolises that all the children of the Church shall be similarly perfected in a threefold way: by the perfection of the faith; by the illumination of the spirit and by the purification of all the senses which constitute the soul and the body.

15. That the prayers said both standing and inclined until *Our Father who art in heaven* are eighteen in number symbolises that the Word by His number eight, has given us the ten *theoriai* so that we may have the freedom in the ten sense vis-à-vis all the hostile operations. The standing and the inclination of the presbyter show that in the

sacrifice that he offers, his standing is for the living, and the inclinations are for the departed; similarly also for those who are near and away.

16. That the deacon reads the canons and the canons should be six:<sup>3</sup> That the deacon reads the canons, symbolises that the holy angels, which are near to us instruct those who are above them regarding our manners, conduct and deeds (p.67\*), whether good or evil, but they instruct especially when they see our triumphs, and our courageous combats. Similarly they remember those who are in tribulations or in difficulties in any way. Therefore, being the type of the angles, the deacon remembers the children of the holy Church who are found in difficulties in any way, after having fallen from a place of blessedness.

That the canons should be six, symbolises that it is in the sixth age (of the world) that God the Word came to effect the salvation of all the human race, and also that man is composed of four qualities and composed of two parts: the four qualities, for he is from heat, coldness, dryness and humidity and is composed of two parts: from the soul and the body - which together make six, in which we are strictly required to be pure and then to approach the eucharist.

17. That the proclamation (*koruzutho*) shall follow the

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3. The six fold division of the canons is also found in Bar Kepha (Eucharist, p. 63). Originally the "canons" consisted of a single prayer with two parts: first remembering the living and the second the dead. (Eg. The Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles and the Greek Saint James). The six-fold division might have been introduced in Mesopotamia, probably by Jacob of Edessa.



canons, symbolises this:<sup>4</sup> the proclamation indicates that, because of the purity and the holiness in the Holy Church, that the Holy Spirit descends and perfects the sacrifice that the Church has offered. The proclamation signifies also that in the same way as God the Word was completely perfected by the Holy Spirit, the sacrifice placed on the mystical table is perfected by the Holy Spirit.

18. That *the angel of concord* should (follow) the proclamation, symbolises that all who receive the eucharist (should do it) with purity and holiness. *The angel of concord* is our Lord Jesus Christ, who is called the angel of the Father (Mal 3:1), as He became "revelator" (*mbadqono*) of that which was hidden and invisible in His Father; it is He who had shown concord between the Father and the men, who (p.68\*) came in truth in search of the saintly souls, and will take them in peace out of the body and place them with the angels.

19. That the prayer *Our Father who art in heaven* shall be said at the end, symbolises that all the "caused" are summoned before God, whether they are equal to Him in nature, that is the Son and the Holy Spirit, or they are separated from Him by nature, that is the angels, men and creatures - all are raised up towards Him; it is He who, by His great mercy will lift up towards Him all the children of the Church, in this world and in the coming world, especially those who keep His divine commandments, and accomplish them all the days of their life.

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4. koruzuto is a long litany read by the deacon to which the people respond "Lord have mercy upon us". It corresponds to the *katholiki* found in the liturgical manuscripts. cfr. Sader, *Lieu de culte*, p.121.

20. Moreover, those who get a chance to read this treatise, which is an exposition of all the mysteries of the Holy Church, and when they read and meditate, they will perfectly fulfill what it contains. They should know that if they fulfill what is written in this writing, they shall be ranked with the celestial powers. But if they do otherwise, they should know that their dwelling will be with the troops of the hostile spirits: in this world, by the shameful passions which befall to them, and in the coming world, by the torments which do not end or cease. This suffices for the sons of the Holy Church, especially for those who are instructed and who have dedicated themselves for the study of the holy books.

21. The commentary on the *qurobo* is finished. By the hands of the feeble sinner Abraham, son of Yonan of the village of Sattiya. Pray for me and for my parents, in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.











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- 11 Curian Kaniampampil The Gospel of St. Mathew (in Syriac Verse)